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ABSTRACT

Forecast of a 1986 program of educational innovation involving education stamps and student bank accounts is presented. The objectives of the program are to provide more efficient, less expensive, and more equal education. The author maintains that these objectives will be met by allowing average citizens to spend money on an individual basis in pursuit of education. Focused on are such aspects of the project as checkbook management rules for each age group, education stamp allocation, extra checks for job related competencies, legislative allocation of tax money for distribution to individuals, and adult and community education programs. Evaluation of all aspects of the program is discussed, measurements of public opinion and of cost and benefits are outlined, and the author's judgment that the program will succeed is explained. The report is presented in eight chapters which have the following titles: "A Look into The Future," "Evaluation--How Well Did It Work," "Evaluation Means Measurement," "Evaluation Means Personal Judgment," "Evaluation Means Equating Performance with Prestated Objectives," "Evaluation Means Evolution," "Evaluation Means Public Opinion," and "Evaluation Means Tax Dollars." (Author/DB)

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TITLE

FUTURISTICS AND THE ROLE OF THE RESPONSIBLE LEADER IN PROVIDING BETTER SCHOOLS FOR LESS MONEY

SUBTITLE

A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

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FOR THE CLEARINGHOUSE
ON TEACHER EDUCATION

SP 009 431

NOTE -- As a look into the future, this document is written as a forecast rather than as a report. For ease of reading, the style of a report has been used.

This documents reads like it had been written in 1986 whereas it was written in 1976.

TITLE

THE ROLE OF THE RESPONSIBLE LEADER IN PROVIDING BETTER SCHOOLS FOR LESS MONEY

A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

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THE ROLE OF THE
RESPONSIBLE LEADER IN
PROVIDING
BETTER SCHOOLS FOR LESS MONEY

Howard P. ALVIR, Ph.D.

A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

Ten years ago, it wouldn't have been possible.

There were laws against it.

There were educators who never heard of the idea and were dead set against EDUCATION STAMPS which sounded too much like FOOD STAMPS to be manageable.

But, in 1986, things are different.

Every child in McKnowville was given a bank account number and a check book. Deposits were made quarterly. It was permitted to collect interest on unspent balances.

The checks could be cashed anywhere--not only in schools. Up to the age of 10, each child had to have one or more parents countersign. From the age of 10 to 14, any responsible adult could countersign. From 14 to 18, the student could sign. The rules were simple. If the check was spent on bubble gum instead of school, there were no questions asked. However, at the age of 18, anyone not possessing a high school diploma or its equivalent had to use the money remaining or stop getting

a free handout for education. The only way to get money after 18 was on a competency basis.

This meant that, instead of quarterly checks of a fixed amount, certain necessary competencies were paid for in hard cash, the amount depending upon a variety of things to be decided by the legislature after consultation with the job market.

For example, if an 18 year old could demonstrate competency in a particular job skill, this individual could get anywhere from $200 to $750 once the skills in question had been verified as specified in the job description. While the bill was still in the senate, this provision had been attacked publicly in the press. However, the school board held to its contention that jobs were needed and that a bounty was a cheaper expense that the setting up of a training program. In addition to this, unemployed individuals and those desirous of upgrading their present job found it highly rewarding to have both a lump sum and a promise of a job. Of course, if the job weren't accepted, the lump sum exam success payment had to be refunded to the public coffers.

The rules were simple : every child from birth to age 18 got so much a quarter; there were very few strings attached to the countersigning after the child reached the age of 10. After the age of 18, each job related competency was worth so much money; no questions were asked. If you could demonstrate a needed competency, you got the lump sum payment and a job. In a way, the self-educated were made financially equal with the diploma-ridden generation.

EVALUATION -- HOW WELL DID IT WORK

When asked the question, "How well did the McKnowville EDUCATION STAMPS program work?" the computer oracle flashed out a message on its cathode ray screen :

"E = M . . . inconclusive."

"E = P . . . controversial."

"E = (PERF = OBJ) = VERIFY . . . 89%."

"E = EVOLVE . . . so, so."

"E = PUBL OPIN . . . tolerated."

"E = TAX $ . . . a money maker!"

It must be remembered by readers in the 1970's that an exclamation point (!) followed by a quotation mark (") is the cybernetic equivalent of intense excitement usually associated with the birth of a new idea or the beginning of a successful operation which grows from seed money to a promising enterprise. By 1986, computers had become more emotional and lovable. They tried to keep on being rational, but occasionally they broke out of their stereotyped image.

To understand the full impact of the EDUCATION STAMPS ACT, each of the above evaluations will be examined in detail. 1st, the evaluation formula will be explained. 2nd, the formula will be applied to each age group affected, for example, (a) from birth till age 10, (b) from 10 till age 14, (c) from 14 till age 18, and (d) from age 18 and upwards. 3rd, issues will be placed in perspective. 4th, conclusions, that is, opinions based upon the preceding analyses, will be drawn.

E = M

EVALUATION MEANS MEASUREMENT

Equating evaluation with measurement is easy to do. After all, once a yardstick is agreed upon as acceptable, it is a simple matter to arrange the sampling and tabulations.

In the EDUCATION STAMPS ACT, three easily measurable criteria were laid down : total dollars spent, the birth rate, and the sickness rate. There were very few complications in gathering these head counts. In the town of McKnowville for fiscal year 1986, there were the following totals :

TOTAL DOLLARS SPENT	$400,000
THE BIRTH RATE	30
THE SICKNESS RATE	200

That's all there was. These simple numbers responded to the criterion of E = M. Of course, endless comparisons were made in the papers.

The fact was made quite clearly that 200 EDUCATION STAMPS ACT (ESA) enrollees cost $2,000 a year each while the 200 public school enrollees cost $3,000 a year each. It was pointed out that the birth rate shot up from 20 per 1000, the average for the period 1981 through 1985, to 30 per 1,000. In addition, the number of medical acts for the age group 0 through 18 years sank to 200 curative acts from a previous 5 year average of 380.

Each of these three measurements were broken down into the following age groups : 0 - 10, 10-14, 14-18, and 18-up. These breakdowns are omitted from this summary report.

As a result of public discussion of the above numbers, certain issues were raised and resolved for FY 1987.

It was decided that paying $2000 per head from ages 0 through 18 was inequitable. The age group 0 through 10 was to get a cut of 20% which was to be equally distributed to the age group 14 through 18.

Politicians who campaigned on the inappropriateness of the term "rate" in both birth rate and sickness rate were laughed off the scene. The candidate who won defined sickness rate as the total number of "curative medical acts performed on the population ages 0 through 18." This led to talk about defining preventive medicine, but the bill was never passed. Instead, curative medical acts were defined as those paid for by Blue Cross and Blue Shield during the years 1970-80.

Two principles emerged : 1st, participation in ESA was to remain voluntary and 2nd, IQ and other test scores, including so-called achievement paper-and-pencil exams, were also matters of personal choice, and always permitted to be used by believers.

Some on-lookers were bitter in their opinions. The sickness rate was equated with H in HEW; the birth rate with E; and the total dollars spent with W. Health, Education, and Welfare were in

Religious skeptics noted that the $2,000 per baby had occurred during the same year that the birth rate went up from 20 to 30. Simultaneously, the abortion rates showed a significant decline.

Social critics pointed out that rich families were responsi[illegible] for the birth and abortion rates. It was observed that ESA gave the father of a family of 12 children the equivalent of

$24,000 of discretionary income plus 12 votes in running for ESA school board.

Psychiatric experts claimed that the improvement in health was illusory. Facts and cases were analyzed which seemed to point up one conclusion : doctors were not using preventive medicine so much as the power of suggestion to cure by prevention many of the aches and pains to which modern human beings had become resigned. Still, certain laws were rigorously enforced : if your child became sick, the ESA bounty was reduced 10%. If your child were sick and not reported, the bounty was reduced 50%. The covers of TIME and NEWSWEEK plastered the words, "I don't give a damn how it happened -- costs are DOWN -- sickness is down -- births are UP."

There is a certain simplistic naivete in the above summary of E = M, but think how much easier it is to digest and discuss the three numbers we rely upon in 1986. It was too complicated back in 1976 even to grasp the facts.

E = PJ

EVALUATION MEANS PERSONAL JUDGMENT

Equating evaluation with personal judgment requires the recognition and utilization of expert human judges. Once the umpires are agreed upon, a quick uncomplicated assessment can point the finger both at success and at failure.

A number of referees were proposed. In the last analysis, the magic number of three won. The following elected representatives

reported to Congress on the "quality, equality, and practicality" of the ESA program :

the BABY judge

the TAX DOLLAR judge

the TEACHER judge

In addition to the principle of one person, one vote, the following principles were added to the election law for these judgeships: (a) one extra vote for each child per family; (b) one extra vote for each $500 tax paid per tax-payer; (c) one extra vote for each year of teaching experience per teacher. The law was quite severe : extra baby votes were only for the baby judge; the same was true respectively with extra tax dollar and teacher votes. The extra votes were complicated to count, but popular support guaranteed the success of the system. It seemed that there was something in it for everyone.

The baby judge felt that the best education was being given in the high school years. This meant that the age group of 14-18 years was achieving proportionately higher than any other segment of the school population. When pressed for an explanation, the baby judge replied, "It's all that money. They get 20% more than any other group. If it weren't for automatic indexing, the other sectors would be even farther behind." When presented with facts pointing out that 455% of the 14-18 age group had personal TV sets, the baby judge replied, "More power to them. Personally, I prefer schools, but as long as the minimum competencies are being met, I'll let any 15 year old drop out of school to learn more at home."

The tax dollar judge had an understandable but short evaluation, "For the first time since 1974, the tax rate is down while the learning rate is up. Amen, I say, amen."

The teacher judge was eloquent and long-winded. "Years ago, my father was a fireman on the railroads. He didn't like it when his job was abolished, but he put up with it and all the boredom it entailed. I have dedicated my life to teaching in a school with regular classes and with students forced to stay in school until the minimum age. Now, things have changed. Yes, things have changed. The TV screen has replaced the blackboard. The cathode ray tube connected to an electric typewriter has replaced the student notebook. Cassette recorders have taken the place of class notes. In spite of it all, education is doing a good job. No teachers have been fired, and all former teachers are assured of a job until retirement. At first, I resisted the notion of Education Stamps, but now I realize that it's time to update. Up with ESA, all the way."

Childless couples were at first against the ESA blanket checks. Then, it dawned upon them that competency was the new name of the game in adult education. Because there was more time in the evening for parents without children to attend school, the $50 standard adult education competency tuition fee was a good investment since it paid off in a bounty ranging from $200 to $750. However, money didn't seem to be the main motive. Competency, not cash, was the motto of adult and community education programs. Opinion polls confirmed the impression that most adults were quite happy with the stress placed on competency.

Mothers and fathers of families with children were at first turned off by the idea of money for competency. After all, raising a child and providing for its education was a full time responsibility of any mature adult. Then, things began to change. Whereas in the 1970's, social lines were formed along paths parallel to the number of children in two families, in the 1980's, social friendships were based upon mutual interests and learning experiences. It was not unusual for two friends to learn together. The childless friend went to school to learn in adult education classes. The parent stayed at home and picked up enough each weekend to pass rigidly defined competency exams. Community was the way childless and parental friends described their relationship. Many mothers and fathers expressed shock when confronted with the question of how much competency bonuses influenced community. Instances were recorded in the town records of McKnowville where childless couples adopted children of close friends when one or both parents died. Opinion polls confirmed the impression that childless adults and parents alike approved of the community benefits that accompanied the introduction of ESA into education.

All in all, it was easy to conclude that both competency and community were words that had become favorable and well accepted emotional values to most adults whether childless or not. As one office seeker said, "Competency leads to community, and community leads to competency."

E = (PERF = OBJ)

EVALUATION MEANS EQUATING PERFORMANCE WITH PRESTATED OBJECTIVES

Equating performance with prestated objectives is one way to evaluate on accomplishments and impact. Such an approach to evaluation examines the final results and asks whether or not the objectives were achieved.

From 1970 until 1985, this process floundered in the mire of trying to spell out objectives for a wide variety of competencies. In 1986, a law was passed which gave each state approved exam a unique identifier number.

For all practical purposes, the number of the exam was the number of the objective. People stopped trying to write lengthy and wordy objectives. As a point of interest, it might be noted that most school districts reported an overstock of paper. The numbers were long and complicated at times, but much easier to operate than voluminous objectives.

The judge and accountant was the computer.

Every course, text, media, service, or lesson was given the number of the corresponding exam. For open schools, #0, #00, #000, and #0000 were assigned depending upon the degrees of freedom permitted. If your child purchased a toy with #113,117 attached, the social security number of the child was entered into the memory banks. If and when your child succeeded on exam #113,117 -- even 30 years later --, the computer would correlate the two items, namely, the toy and the exam.

Since it is conceivable that two toys could relate to exam #113,117, more information was available. By going to a phone booth and dialing TOY-ABC-#113,117, you could receive the following information :

THE MEDIAN COST OF TOY-ABC	= $17.50
NUMBER SOLD	= 557
NUMBER RESOLD	= 133
NUMBER OF EXAMS #113-117 PASSED	= 227
PERCENT OF EFFECTIVENESS	= 32.9%

It is to be noted that 32.9% results from dividing 227 by 690 and multiplying by 100. Similarly, it is noted that 690 results from adding 557 and 133.

For comparative effectiveness on TOY-ABD-#113,117 and BOOK-XYZ-#113,117, the individual concerned merely dials the appropriate code number on the nearest phone.

Open school advocates criticize this approach to evaluation because of its tendency to presume an exam state as the natural way to learn. Critics of open schools rebute with the idea that the exams are open to revision by popular and scholarly mandate. Programmers identify these revised forms of the same exam by suffixes such as -01, -02, or -03 to be added to the basic exam code identifier such as #113-117.

Popular opinion has it that the system devised by the EDUCATION STAMPS ACT is no more complicated than staying home and ordering merchandise from a catalog. Some even add that ESA provides higher quality benefits to the consumer.

E = EVOLVE

EVALUATION MEANS EVOLUTION . . . .

Equating evaluation with evolution is not a new idea. As far back as Wednesday, May 26, 1976, the FEDERAL REGISTER, Vol. 41, No. 103, page 21474, recognized PROCESS EVALUATION.

Similarly in the EDUCATION STAMPS ACT, process evaluation or formative evaluation is a timely examination of project activities that actually occur with a view to : (1) how the activities correspond with what was promised; (2) to what extent the activities appear to be effective; and (3) how the activities can be improved by modification.

Within such a system, as each modification is implemented, the evaluation cycle would start again. In its simplest forms, process evaluation is a management information system. As a MIS, process evaluation is distinct from impact evaluation which examines the final results and asks whether the objectives were achieved.

As is obvious from the preceding pages, changes were implemented in ESA policies and procedures from the very beginning. Modifications were made before the termination of the ESA funding. These modifications were such as to provide constant feedback on how well the project was going. The details of this feedback have been given in the sections on E = M, E = PJ, and E = (PERF = OBJ).

Public opinion seemed to agree with the ability of the ESA to adapt to local needs and constraints. For example, for the first time, both isolated and well populated areas were able to provide equal access to all citizens desiring to learn.

Isolated areas tend to offer limited opportuntiies to young and old alike. There is plenty of fresh air, but also less culture than available in the over-crowded and polluted high density areas.

An open school relying upon volunteers can well succeed in a crowded urban area. There are enough adults ready and willing to donate an hour or two to go around. In a less populated area, such an approach to an open school is out of the question.

Initially, ESA tried to beam in satellite relayed TV courses to compensate for lack of cultural events. This media invasion was perceived by local residents as an invasion of machines when more humanity was really desired.

Under the wing of ESA, a system of expenses-paid volunteers was begun. Basically, a waiting list of culture dispensers was developed. Each of these individuals could volunteer services. Each service was identified with the number of the corresponding educational objective. During weekends and summer months, a number of prominent scholars and educators were reachable in the remote parts of the state.

ESA provided money for a number of purposes, for example, the services rendered, the extra travel costs, and the percentage of success based upon previous "track records" in achieving pre-specified and unspecified objectives. In fact, attempts have been made to define a Liberal Education as the product of association with educators who have mostly unspecified objectives and a documented list of "satisfied" customers, that is, learners.

E = PUBL OPIN

EVALUATION MEANS PUBLIC OPINION

Equating evaluation with public opinion is easy to do provided the evaluator realizes that many different publics react to every educational alternative.

For example, there are groups of individuals and organizations that actually prefer to think of and react to education as if it were a THING. For such human beings, E = (PERF = OBJ) is the magic wand of success. Every piece of learning must be counted and accounted for. It's almost like pretending that so much money is necessary for happiness. The difficulty here is that there is a substantial backbone of truth amid the falsehood of such reasoning. The need for a certain amount of prespecified objectives -- for example, the three R's -- lends credibility to this position.

There are other groups and institutions that take a different tack. It is a commonplace that certain individuals and types refuse to see a doctor of medicine unless sickness strikes and strikes hard. Such people literally have to be dragged into a hospital or carried in on a stretcher. There are others who believe in preventive medicine and all it implies as far as such things as preventive health organizations are concerned.

A similar polarity of viewpoints exists as far as education is concerned. The parallel is not perfect, but it is enlightening.

Some people approach a physician and say, "I'm sick -- cure me." Others say, "Keep me from getting ill."

Some human beings approach education and say, "Teach me what I need to know in the future." Others say, "Teach me only what I need to know right now."

Under the EDUCATION STAMPS ACT, both viewpoints were respected. The learner, and not the school, decided upon which activities were for NOW or for the FUTURE.

Under the funding set up by ESA, the criterion of public opinion was shifted from philosophical decisions (Is Education a THING or a PERSON?) to pragmatic situations (Do I use my ESA vouchers for this or that?).

Some ESA users did act as if they believed that education was a THING and went out and purchased touchable gadgets with prespecified objectives. Other ESA users did act as if they believed that education was a PERSON and went out and purchased services, some of which had very few prespecified objectives.

ESA did not try to prove one group was better than the other. In this way, the 1986 evaluation of public opinion registered a great amount of public confidence in the system. Some people never seem happy unless criticizing something or someone. ESA gave them a larger number of targets for concern. In this way, even the critical nit-pickers found more happiness under the conditions that prevailed with the McKnowville plan.

E = TAX $

EVALUATION MEANS TAX DOLLARS

Equating evaluation with tax dollars came as a surprise to even the most dedicated EDUCATION STAMPS ACT proponents.

The results of comparing TOTAL DOLLARS spent in 1985 and 1986 indicate that there was no increase despite inflation and non-indexation.

In terms of the 1985 dollar, this means that ESA actually cost less in 1986 while serving more individuals.

While it is difficult to predict what 1987 will bring, it seems realistic to conclude that a step has been taken to balance the budget.

Economic forecasters report a solid upturn in the gross national product (GNP). There is one indicator however that forecast this rise at the end of 1985. This indicator is the performance record of products covered by the ESA code numbers. For example, the 10 highest rating learning products belong to companies whose stock has risen at least 33% between January and June 1986. Stock market analysts are having trouble assessing the implications of this unprecedented correlation between learning and earning.

Social historians recall that in 1976 (for example, BUSINESS WEEK, July 12, 1976, p. 12), stock prices were more accurate predictors than the consensus forecast of economists as far as the U. S. economy was concerned.

CONCLUSION

Armed with ESA data in 1986, educational evaluators are beginning to express a new hypothesis : namely, given a reasonable amount of money with no strings attached, the average citizen is able to do a better job in financially supporting "what works" in education than the scholarly professor or the institutionalized school board member, including the superintendent of schools.

As a hypothesis, such a theory must be verified by experience and experimentation. The experience of ESA during 1986 seems to support this explanation. The experimentation to be conducted during 1987 with control and experimental groups, with pretests and posttests, with anticipated gains and real gains, and with variance and covariance is expected to be much more complicated.

In spite of professional plaudits, this approach is having a hard time getting funded. One member of the house was quoted as saying, "I know it's scientific, but I'm not sure I understand what it all means!" In the senate, the problem was resolved by recommending an EVALUATION STAMPS ACT which permits any citizen the right to subsidize at Federal expense any evaluation plan. This extra fillip was enough to swing the STATUS QUO lobby to the side of both ESA (Educati Stamps Act) and EVSA (Evaluation Stamps Act).

Time will tell whether or not it is EASIER, LESS EXPENSIVE, and MORE EFFICIENT to equalize educational opportunity through equal amounts of money rather than by unequal amounts of expenditures to catch up or make up for past inequities.